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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001861

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT, EUR/NB; NSC FOR  
1E. MILLARD

DEPARTMENT PLEASE ALSO PASS TOPEC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10-29-13  
TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER CE NO LTTE  
SUBJECT: Norwegians sending placeholder response to  
President on request for removal of chief monitor

Refs: Colombo 1858, and previous

(U) Classified by Charge' d'Affaires James F. Entwistle.  
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

SUMMARY

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11. (C) Norway is sending a letter to President Kumaratunga informing her that it is reviewing her demand that chief monitor Tellefsen be fired and that the GoN will prepare its own report on the initial October 16 incident which sparked the controversy. The Norwegian Ambassador told the Charge' that the GoN is playing for time, hoping the matter will blow over. Tellefsen, in the meantime, is returning to Norway for consultations. Tamils are exasperated with the President, but the Tigers are mum so far (as the Norwegians have asked them to be). Although her demand has left a bad taste, it is positive that the Tigers' long-awaited plans on unveiling their power-sharing ideas appear to be moving ahead as scheduled. END SUMMARY.

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Norway sending Reply  
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12. (C) The Norwegian government is sending a letter to President Kumaratunga informing her that it is reviewing her demand that the chief of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Tryggve Tellefsen be fired for purportedly being pro-Tamil Tiger (See Reftels). (Note: This is the second letter the GoN is sending to the President after her demand that Tellefsen be removed. A short letter confirming receipt of the President's letter on the matter was sent earlier this week.) In an October 28 conversation with the Charge', Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar said the latest letter was basically a placeholder, informing the President that the GoN was carefully reviewing her demand. The letter noted that Norway would prepare its own report on the original October 16 incident which sparked the controversy. (Note: Per Reftels, the October 16 incident involved a SLMM officer's phone call to the Tigers asking the group about reports that one of its arms resupply ships had been spotted off the northeast coast.) In doing so, the GoN would have to consult with the GSL Ministry of Defense, the LTTE, and the other Nordic countries that have provided monitors to the SLMM.

13. (C) Brattskar related that he was meeting President Kumaratunga late October 29 to deliver the letter and review the situation further. He confided to the Charge' that Norway was essentially "playing for time," hoping that the President would let the matter blow over without igniting more controversy. After the letter is delivered, the Norwegian Embassy plans to issue a press statement summarizing its contents, Brattskar said.

14. (SBU) In another development, Kjersti Tromsdahl told poloff that October 29 press reports that SLMM chief Tellefsen is returning to Oslo for consultations were accurate. It is not clear how long he will be away from Sri Lanka.

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Tigers Mum; Plans for Counterproposal Rollout Intact  
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15. (C) For its part, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization has kept mum regarding the President's demand for Tellefsen's removal. There have been fact-based articles posted on the situation on the pro-LTTE website "TamilNet," but no LTTE commentary. In his conversation with the Charge', Brattskar noted that he had called the LTTE to request that it not go public and inject itself in the controversy, as that would only complicate matters.

16. (C) At this point, the plans for the Tigers' unveiling of their long awaited counterproposals on the GSL's north/east interim administration offer remain intact and, per Reftels, include the following strands:

-- On October 31, Brattskar will fly to the LTTE-controlled town of Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka to collect the group's response.

-- Brattskar will then give the LTTE's response to the GSL.

-- In the first public presentation of the proposals, S.P. Thamilchelvam, the LTTE political chief, is scheduled to hold a press conference in Kilinochchi on November 1. The schedule now calls for the press conference to begin at 10:00 A.M. Over 150 Sri Lanka- and foreign-based journalists have reportedly requested LTTE credentials for the briefing.

-- The text of the Tiger response will then be posted on TamilNet at the time of the press conference or soon after it concludes.

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Tamil Politicians Upset  
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17. (C) While the Tigers themselves have been quiet, Tamil politicians with close links to the LTTE have gone public with their deep concerns about the President's demand regarding Tellefsen and reports that she told the military that it is free to ignore him (see Reftels).  
1N. Raviraj, a Tamil National Alliance MP from Jaffna and one of the politicians quoted in the press, told poloff October 29 that the President's demand was "irresponsible" and "totally unwarranted." Speaking in angry tones, Raviraj, who is normally quiet and unassuming, added that her demand might jeopardize the peace process. It also put "people on the wrong footing" on the eve of the Tigers' unveiling of their counterproposals.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) Although it might have been popular with her most rabid, anti-peace process supporters, the President's demand regarding Tellefsen has left a bad taste all around. It certainly has made life much harder for the Norwegian facilitation effort, especially at a time when the GoN is working overtime to revivify the process by bringing the Tigers back to talks. One net positive is that the LTTE's plans on unveiling their power-sharing ideas appear to be moving ahead as scheduled. While the group remains quiet, however, it is pretty clear by the thread of the remarks of Tamil politicians that the Tigers are angry about the President's latest move. END COMMENT.

19. (U) Minimize considered.

ENTWISTLE